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ABSTRACT

The present study grew out of interviews conducted as part of a 10 year longitudinal study conducted by the State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY/B). Begun in 1966, this report is one of 50 which have been published and distributed to the university community in order to provide information about students' backgrounds, expectations, perceptions, values, and experiences. It is hoped that this information can then contribute to greater understanding of students by faculty, staff, and other students and can lead to more informed decisions about University policies and programs. The present study explores in some detail the opinions of 240 freshmen entering SUNY/B in the fall of 1972. Topics examined are 1.) family relationships, the feelings and behaviors of parents toward students and of students toward parents; 2.) peer relationship and the importance of trust and confidence; 3.) heterosexual relationships, opinions about sexual intercourse and non-traditional living arrangements; 4.) marriage, divorce, and children; and 5.) the concept of God or some kind of life force. Tables are included with discussion of each of the five areas. (Author/SES)

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Student Perceptions of Family Friends and Others

Survey Study 1972 Freshmen

Student Testing and Research Center
Division of Student Affairs and Services
State University of New York at Buffalo

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS

FAMILY, FRIENDS AND OTHERS

Helen S. Wyant

Student Testing and Research Center
Division of Student Affairs and Services
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January 1973

STUDENT PERCEPTIONS: FAMILY, FRIENDS AND OTHERS

Preface

The Division of Student Affairs and Services at State University of New York at Buffalo (SUNY/B) established an office of research in 1963 to develop methods and report results of assessment of SUNY/B students. To date, nearly fifty reports have been published and distributed to the University community.[1] These studies provide information about students' backgrounds, expectations, perceptions, values and experiences and can contribute to greater understanding of students by faculty, staff and other students, and to more-informed decisions about University policies and programs.

The present study grew out of experience with interviews conducted as part of ten-year longitudinal studies of SUNY/B students begun in 1966.[2] Over the years, the content of the interviews became more personal, involving expanded discussion of personal development and self concept, peer relationships, sex, marriage, religion, and family relationships. The importance students attributed to such non-academic experiences is also attested to by other Student Testing and Research Center studies involving incoming freshmen,[3] seniors,[4] and members of one interview group five years after they had entered SUNY/B as freshmen.[5] The purpose of this report is to contribute to further understanding of SUNY/B students' perceptions, feelings and opinions concerning some of these areas.

1. *An Annotated Bibliography of Current Research Publications* is available from the Student Testing and Research Center, 316 Harriman Library, SUNY/B, Buffalo, New York, 14214, upon request. All reports referred to in this study were generated by this office.

2. Kubiniec, Cathleen M., Wyant, Helen S. & Alberti, Joan M., *The University Experience, The First Few Weeks*, 1968
Wolfe, Nancy S., *The University Experience, The First Year*, 1969
Wolfe, Nancy S. & Claar, Joan M., *The University Experience, The Second Year*, 1971
Rott, Marilyn A., *The University Experience, The Third Year*, 1972

3. Wyant, Helen S., *I expect to find that SUNY/B...*, 1972 (a)

4. Faulman, Jane, 71 *Senior Survey, Part I: College Experiences and Activities*, 1972

5. Wyant, Helen S., *The Value of the College Experience* (Unpublished Paper), 1972 (b)

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Chapter I

METHOD

BACKGROUND

Data about personal opinions, perceptions and expectations were obtained by interview in the longitudinal project mentioned in the preface of this report. In order to explore whether such data could be obtained without the trust and rapport fostered during interviews, a questionnaire, *Student Perception Survey* (SPS), was developed in 1971 using an incomplete sentence format and drawing on interview experience for content. The SPS was administered to incoming SUNY/B freshmen in the summer of 1971; responses of the students indicated that personal data could, indeed, be collected by an incomplete sentence instrument.[1] To increase consistency of data categories and reduce data analysis time, a further refinement was made in 1972. A multiple-choice questionnaire, *Family, Friends and Others* (FFO), was developed drawing on students' responses to the SPS and interview questions for construction of item options. FFO was administered to incoming SUNY/B freshmen in the summer of 1972, and again, the students provided data about personal areas of their lives. That data are the basis for this report.

ADMINISTRATION

As in the past nine years, data were collected by this office at each of the ten Summer Planning Conferences conducted for incoming freshmen during the summer before they matriculated at SUNY/B. FFO was administered on July 19, and August 2. In order to encourage maximum freedom in responding to these personal questions, the students were directed not to write their names or identifying numbers on the questionnaire. Two hundred and forty-seven students attended the two research sessions; 240 of them completed usable questionnaires.

SAMPLE

The sample comprised 240 students, seventeen percent of the freshmen who planned to enter SUNY/B in the fall after their graduation from high school in 1972. Sixty percent of them were men, and more than ninety percent were unmarried and/or between sixteen and eighteen years old. Half of them planned to live in university housing, forty-four percent planned to live at home with their parents, and five percent planned other housing. The composition of the sample and that of the 1972 class of freshmen who entered SUNY/B the fall after graduation from high school is reported in Table 1. Because of the large proportion of students who were sixteen to eighteen years old and single, the age and marital status dimensions were not investigated further. The sample was not randomly selected, therefore, results of the report cannot be generalized to the total class.

[1]Reported in Wyant, 1972 (a).

Table 1

COMPOSITION OF THE SAMPLE†

N=240

NUMBER	Sample	Class Δ
	240	1439
	17%	

SEX	Sample	Class
Men	59%	56%
Women	41%	44%

AGE	Sample	Class
16-18	92%	*
19-21	7	*
22-24	-	*
25-30	-	*
over 30	0	*

RESIDENCE	Sample	Class
University housing	51%	48%
With parents	44%	*
Other	5%	*

MARITAL STATUS	Sample	Class
Single	98%	*
Married	-	*
Have been married, no longer am	1%	*

†1972 Freshmen who entered SUNY/B the fall after their graduation from high school.

ΔAdmissions and Records and University Housing data.

*Data not available.

TEXT AND TABLES

Text and tables are used to present the data in this study. Data are reported in terms of percentage of the number of students who responded to each option of each item. In four items, the percent of non-response was unusually large and is noted at the time the pertinent data are discussed. Because the percentage of non-response varied slightly among options of an item, no report of non-response is given in the tables. Average non-response of 151 options (omitting the four mentioned) was three percent. Percents are rounded to the nearest whole number; .4 or less is reported in the tables by a dash. The options in tables are presented in the order in which they were presented in the survey if they constitute a continuum - otherwise in decreasing percentage of positive responses. In some cases, responses to two or more items concerning a common subject are reported in a single table to provide a more integrated perception of the students' responses.

TERMS

The respondents were neither students nor freshmen at the time that they completed the FFO; in the text, however, the terms *incoming freshmen, freshmen* and *students* are used interchangeably to refer to the 240 young men and women in the sample. *Commuter* and *resident* are used to designate those students who planned to live at home with their parents and those who planned to live in university housing, respectively. The terms half, a fourth, etc., are used in the text when the actual figure is within two percent of that fraction. An asterisk after the symbol % in the tables indicates that directions were given to check as many options as applied; therefore, since some students checked more than one option, those percentages do not total to one hundred. The notation NC at the bottom of the table indicates that Chi square could not be computed for the data reported. The following abbreviations are used: CM=Commuter Men, CW=Commuter Women, RM=Resident Men, RW=Resident Women.

STATISTICS

Chi square tests were applied to the data when appropriate. With data involving the residence dimension, the five percent of the students who indicated residence other than with parents or in university housing were excluded in order to help meet expected frequency requirements for the Chi square tests. In some instances, tests indicated significant differences in the sex or residence dimensions but inspection of sex/residence data revealed that the differences were misleading, i.e., differences were attributable to sex/residence differences rather than sex or residence differences. If tests on sex/residence data produced no significant differences, the misleading "significances" are not reported. If tests indicated significance of difference for sex and/or for residence data as well as sex/residences data, only the latter are reported. All Chi square tests were tested at the five percent level of confidence. Where Chi square could not be computed, differences judged to be of note are reported in the text.

CONTENT

Following this chapter on method, the students' descriptions of their relationships with their mothers, fathers and family are reported in Chapter II. Their descriptions of relationships with peers are the subject of Chapter III, and their opinions and feelings about heterosexual relationships and non-traditional living arrangements are reported in Chapter IV. Opinions and expectations of marriage, divorce and preferences for children are the foci of Chapter V, and perceptions of God or "Some Kind of Life Force" are described in Chapter VI. An overview concludes the study.

Chapter II

MOTHERS, FATHERS AND FAMILIES

As incoming freshmen begin begin their college experiences, they bring with them the impact of their families in shaping their attitudes toward themselves, others and the world. One of the tasks during the following years for them, as well as for their contemporaries who do not go to college, is to develop a sense of their own identity which includes a growth away from dependent relationships with their families and toward mature independent relationships with them. They are helped or hindered in this task by their past and present relationships with their families which may contribute anxiety, conflict, disinterest, support and/or encouragement to their lives. In order to understand this group of young women and men better, several items on FFO were used to explore their perceptions of their relationship with their mothers, fathers and families. Their responses are presented in this chapter.

FAMILIES

The students were asked to indicate which one of several options best described their families most of the time in terms of (a) the quality of their relationships, (b) family interactions, and (c) closeness of the family. Their responses are reported in Table 2.

The majority of these incoming freshmen began their college experiences with positive relationships with their families. Seventy percent of them described their families as loving and their relationships with them as good or great. Not all of the loving families were alike - some were affectionate and demonstrative and others were undemonstrative but supportive. Many of the students described their families as close, sharing concerns and interests; nearly all of the rest said their families were not close, but were loyal and cared about each other. Very few said their families had little interest in each other or avoided each other.

Fewer commuter women than other sex/residence groups said their relationships with their families were good or great; more of them had good relationships with some members of the family but not with others. More women than men described their families as volatile, demonstrative, loving and hating.

MOTHER AND FATHER AND ME

The students were presented with descriptions of some behaviors and feelings which may contribute to a sense of well-being, support and love, and were asked to indicate whether or not the attributes were typical of each parent's relationship to the student most of the time. They were then asked to indicate whether or not several behaviors and feelings were typical of them in relation to each parent most of the time. Responses to these items are reported in Table 3.

TABLE 2

FAMILIES

Quality of Relationship, Interactions, Closeness

N=240

QUALITY OF RELATIONSHIP	%
great	25
good	45
ok/fair	12
good with some, not with others	14
not so good	3
poor	1
terrible	1
INTERACTIONS	
loving, affectionate, demonstrative	33
loving, supportive, undemonstrative	38
pleasant, feelings not particularly deep	11
indifferent	4
unpleasant, feelings not particularly deep	6
hostile, cold	-
hostile, hot-tempered	1
volatile, demonstrative, loving and hating	8
CLOSENESS	
close, share concerns and/or interests	63
not close, but loyal and care about each other	33
not close, little interest in each other	4
not close, avoid each other	1

NC (Chi square not computed)

Feelings and Behaviors of Parents Toward Students

The majority of the students in the group said that the feelings and behaviors defined were typical of their mothers and/or fathers most of the time. Most of the mothers and fathers loved, liked, respected and were interested in the students. Most of the mothers and many of the fathers trusted the students' judgment, discussed values and interests with them and truly listened to them. More fathers than mothers encouraged the students' growth toward independence. Although the characteristic least frequently attributed to either parent was understanding the student, perhaps it should be construed as positively heart-warming that half of these college freshmen felt that their mothers and/or fathers understood them.

Feelings and Behaviors of Students Toward Parents

When asked about their own feelings and behaviors toward their mothers and fathers, the majority of the group again responded positively. Most of them loved, liked and respected their mothers and/or fathers, trusted their parents' judgment, and truly listened to them. Many said they understood, discussed values and interests with and expressed affection for their mothers and/or fathers and counted on them for emotional support.

Although the data indicate that the majority of students had good relationships with both parents, the responses also indicate that more students had good relationships with mothers than with fathers in terms of the characteristics defined. This is substantiated by other research on 1972 SUNY/F freshmen.[1] Most of the feelings and behaviors seem to be fairly reciprocal, but a few exceptions are interesting. Considerably more students said they truly listened to their fathers than said their fathers listened to them; more mothers expressed affection for the students than the students did for their mothers; and more students felt that they understood their mothers and/or fathers than felt they were understood by them. Differences were apparent among the sex/residence groups on a number of the items; however, no consistent patterns of response for the groups were revealed.

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[1] Areele, Martha, Jones, G., *Youthpoll*, 1972, p.9.

Table 3

INTERACTIONS BETWEEN STUDENTS AND PARENTS

N=240

PARENT'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD STUDENT

She or He:	Mother %	Father %
loves me	97	90
is interested in me	96	90
likes me	91	85
respects me	88	83
expresses affection for me	83	62
trusts my judgment	73	72
discusses values and interests with me	73	59
truly listens to me	71	60
encourages my growth toward independence	63	77
understands me	54	48

STUDENT'S BEHAVIOR TOWARD PARENTS

I:	Mother %	Father %
love her/him	96	91
respect her/him	92	91
like her/him	89	84
trust her/his judgment	78	78
truly listen to her/him	75	76
understand her/him	74	63
discuss values and interests with her/him	71	59
express affection for her/him	70	57
count on her/him for emotional support	66	51

NC

Chapter III

PEERS AND CONFIDANTS

Cycles may be created by relationships, particularly new and/or close relationships, in which understanding another or others contributes to understanding of self and others which contributes better relationships with others. Research indicates that SUNY/B students place high value on this kind of relationship and on related interpersonal skills.[1] To learn more about such relationships of freshmen about to begin their college experience, items were included in FFQ concerning relationships with both the same and the opposite sex, and about the number of people the students trusted and confided in. Their responses provide the basis for this chapter.

PEER RELATIONSHIPS

Students were asked to indicate the number, difficulty of establishment, stability, closeness and quality of the majority of their peer relationships. Results are reported in Table 4 by sex to show the similarity in women's and men's peer relationships.

Opposite Sex

There is a remarkable similarity between women's and men's descriptions of their relationships with the opposite sex (see columns two and three of Table 3). The largest proportions of both women and men said they had *a few* relationships with peers of the opposite sex, the majority of them were *good*, some were stable and some fleeting, and the closeness of the relationships fluctuated. Nearly as many students said that relationships with their opposite sex were *easy to establish* as said that they were *somewhat hard to establish*.

Same Sex

Both women and men reported that their relationships with members of their same sex were better, more numerous, easier to establish, more stable, and closer than their opposite-sex relationships. The largest proportions of both women and men said their relationships were *good*, *easy to establish*, and some were fleeting while others were stable. The closeness of same sex relationships fluctuated for the largest percentage of the men, but nearly as many of the women said that the majority of their relationships were *close and trusting* as said that the *closeness fluctuated*. More men than women said they had *many* same-sex relationships.

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[1] Wolfe, p.39-42; Wolfe & Claar, p. 12-16, 35-40, 81-85; Rott, p.81-85, 115-116; Faulman, p.9-15; Wyant, (b).

Table 4

RELATIONSHIPS WITH PEERS

N=228

RELATIONSHIP	WOMEN		MEN	
	With Women %	With Men %	With Women %	With Men %
Number				
I have none	1	6	6	0
I have a few (1-4)	25	39	42	17
I have quite a few (5-10)	42	32	31	34
I have many (11-20)	32	23	21	49
Difficulty in Establishment[1]				
hard to establish	3	17	20	4
somewhat hard to establish	31	45	40	34
easy to establish	66	38	40	62
Stability[2]				
here today, gone tomorrow	1	11	11	3
some stable, some fleeting	56	69	70	61
stable, lasting	43	20	19	36
Closeness[3]				
superficial	2	11	12	1
good but not close	12	27	30	19
closeness fluctuates	44	44	39	49
close, trusting	42	19	20	31
Quality				
terrible	0	4	4	0
not so great/need improvement	3	16	20	3
ok/fair	16	20	21	24
good	46	43	37	51
fine/great	35	17	17	22

Chi square computed for sex differences

1. Relationship with Women - $\chi^2=21.70$, 2df
   Relationship with Men - $\chi^2=18.80$, 2df

2. Relationship with Women - $\chi^2=21.17$, 2df
   Relationship with Men - $\chi^2=10.76$, 2df

3. Relationship with Women - $\chi^2=25.22$, 3df

TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

The students were asked how many people they trusted completely and how many people they confided in. Their responses are reported in Table 5.

Almost all of the students had at least one person they trusted and/or confided in. Interestingly, the data reveal that in some cases they confided in more people than they trusted, and in others, they trusted completely some people in whom they did not confide. The largest proportions of students trusted six or more people completely; they confided in two or three. There were no significant differences between responses of women and men.

Table 5

TRUST AND CONFIDENCE

N=240

Number of People	Trust Completely	Confide In
	%	%
0	11	10
1	11	10
2	14	21
3	16	22
4	15	15
5	9	7
6 or more	25	15

Chapter IV

HETEROSEXUAL RELATIONSHIPS

Previous research indicates that many students evaluate or reevaluate their attitudes about sexual behavior during college years as a result of exposure to different ideas, behaviors or relationships. Sometime during those years, most of them develop attitudes toward their own heterosexual relationships and those of others (not necessarily the same) with which they feel comfortable.[1] To gather information which will contribute to understanding the feelings and attitudes of incoming freshmen concerning heterosexual relationships, several FFO items dealt with sexual intercourse, non-traditional living arrangements and marriage. The students' responses to the first two subjects are described in this chapter; those to the third, in the next chapter. In several items reported in both chapters, the term *ok* was used to avoid the judgmental connotation which might be perceived by the students in terms based on *accept* or *approve*.

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

The freshmen were asked about sexual intercourse in terms of their feelings and frequency of thought. Since there were some significant differences in responses among sex/residence categories, the results are reported by those dimensions in Table 6.

Feelings

The students were asked to indicate as many of the eight options listed as described their feelings about sexual intercourse. Fewer than half of the group checked any one option. Options checked by the largest proportions, in descending order of frequency, were *turns me on*, *tempts me* and *not now, later*. A fifth of the group said they weren't sure of their feelings, and several said sexual intercourse confused and/or scared them. Almost no one said sex turned them off or didn't interest them.

Resident men were more likely than the other groups to say sex turned them on and least likely to say *not now, later* or that they weren't sure of their feelings. Commuter women were least apt of the groups to say it turned them on and most apt to say *not now, later*.

Frequency in Thoughts

The students were asked to indicate which one of five options best described how often they thought about sexual intercourse. Most of them thought about it sometimes or often. The majority of resident men said they thought about it often; the majority of the other groups said they thought about it sometimes.

---

[1] Pott, p.89-92.

Table 6

SEXUAL INTERCOURSE: FEELINGS AND FREQUENCY OF THOUGHTS

N=228

FEELINGS	CM % *	CW % *	RM % *	RW % *	Total % *
turns me on[1]	39	24	67	33	43
tempts me	37	34	39	35	36
not now, later[2]	28	49	5	33	26
confuses me	15	15	16	22	17
scares me	8	12	9	18	11
doesn't interest me	0	2	2	0	1
turns me off	3	2	0	2	2
not sure[3]	20	22	3	29	18

FREQUENCY IN THOUGHTS	CM %	CW %	RM %	RW %	Total %
never think about it	3	0	0	0	1
seldom think about it	8	15	8	17	11
think about it sometimes	56	67	34	57	52
think about it often	27	18	55	24	33
think about it most of the time	6	0	3	2	3
NC					

*Directions were to check as many options as applied; therefore, percents do not total to 100.

1. χ^2=24.67, 3df 2. χ^2=28.67, 3df 3. χ^2=15.71, 3df

QUALIFICATIONS

Given their interest in sex, what if any restrictions would these freshmen place on it? They were asked to indicate which of the options listed best described their qualifications for sexual intercourse in terms of relationship, age and marital status. Their responses are reported in Table 7.

Relationship of Partners

The majority of the group said that sexual intercourse should be an expression of love and/or engaged in only by persons who accept responsibility for physical, social and psychological consequences. Fewer than a fourth of the group thought that it should be engaged in as frequently as desired and possible with whoever was desired and willing, should not necessarily involve emotional attachment, or should be engaged in only in marriage.

More women than men felt that sexual intercourse should be an expression of love.

More resident women and fewer commuter men than others thought sexual relations should be between responsible partners only.

Commuter women were the least likely of the groups to think that sexual intercourse should be engaged in "anytime with anyone" and/or not necessarily involve emotional attachment.

More commuters, both women and men, than residents, said that sex should be engaged in only in marriage.

Earliest Age

Besides the qualifications for relationships, were there restrictions as to age placed on sexual intercourse by this group? The freshmen were asked to indicate the earliest age at which sexual intercourse was ok - specifically between unmarried sex partners.

The majority of the students indicated that sexual relations between unmarried partners was ok. *Eighteen* was the age checked most frequently and by similar proportions of each sex/residence group. *Fifteen* was checked next most often - most frequently by resident men and least frequently by commuter women. Few indicated an age over eighteen; however, a number of commuters said sexual intercourse between unmarried partners was never ok. A fifth of the freshmen were not sure of their opinions.

Adultry

What about the group's opinion of sexual intercourse between unmarried partners at least one of whom was married to someone else? A fifth of the students were not sure. About a third of the students - almost twice as many commuters as residents - thought that adultry was never ok. Half of the residents and a third of the commuters said it was ok under some circumstances or said it was ok as long as both sex partners want it.

Table 7

QUALIFICATIONS RELATED TO SEXUAL INTERCOURSE

N=228

RELATIONSHIP BETWEEN PARTNERS	CM %*	CW %*	RM %*	RW %*	TOTAL %*
should be an expression of love[1]	66	81	52	87	70
should be engaged in only by persons who accept responsibility for physical, social and psychological consequences[2]	49	66	58	76	61
should be engaged in as frequently as desired and possible with whomever is desired and willing[3]	20	7	40	20	24
should not necessarily involve emotional attachment - is simply a means of physical satisfaction of sex drive[4]	19	7	31	15	19
should be engaged in only in marriage[5]	23	27	3	13	15
not sure	11	10	8	4	8

YOUNGEST AGE SEXUAL INTERCOURSE IS OK FOR UNMARRIED PARTNERS

AGE	CM %	CW %	RM %	RW %	TOTAL %
15	20	8	41	15	23
18	39	44	41	40	41
21	0	10	2	10	5
25	2	3	0	0	1
30	0	0	0	0	0
35 or over	0	0	0	0	0
never	19	13	3	2	9
not sure	20	23	14	33	22
NC					

ADULTRY[6]

OPINION	C %	R %	TOTAL %
never ok	47	27	36
ok under some circumstances	19	31	25
ok as long as both sex partners want it	14	20	17
not sure	20	22	21

1. $\chi^2=20.37$, 3df 2. $\chi^2=9.89$, 3df 3. $\chi^2=17.21$, 3df 4. $\chi^2=10.85$, 3df 5. $\chi^2=15.32$, 3df
6. $\chi^2=10.92$, (commuter/residence) 3df

NON-TRADITIONAL LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

Alienation in American society has contributed to efforts to find social units which will offer a combination of security and freedom greater than that provided by the nuclear family in traditional marriage. What attitudes are prevalent among young people about various heterosexual and community relationships which have resulted from this effort? To investigate this, items were included in FFO concerning students' desires to experience various non-traditional living styles and their opinions of such arrangements in relation to traditional marriage. Definitions of the terms, and the report of the results are presented in Table 6.

Desire to Experience

The freshmen were asked to indicate as many of several non-traditional living arrangements as they would like to experience. Cohabitation was the only one that a majority of the group wanted to experience. Half of the students said they would like to live with someone of the opposite sex without being married to her or him. Nearly a third would like to try community and/or communal living, but few liked the idea of group marriage. A fifth of the students said they would not want to try any of the life styles mentioned, and a similar proportion said they weren't sure.

Commuter women were the least likely of the groups to want to experience cohabitation; more men than women said they would like to try group marriage; and more women than men thought they would not like to experience any of the living arrangements described.

Relation to Marriage

Several opinions of non-traditional living arrangements relative to society or to traditional marriage were stated with directions to indicate the one which best described the student's opinion.

None of the students thought that non-traditional living arrangements should replace traditional marriage and very few thought they were harmful to society. The consensus was that there should be acceptable alternatives to traditional marriage - they are good for some people and not for others.

Table 8

NON-TRADITIONAL LIVING ARRANGEMENTS

N=228

DESIRE TO EXPERIENCE		CM % *	CW % *	PM % *	PW % *	TOTAL % *
Cohabitation[1]	(unmarried male and female living together)	54	29	66	55	53
community living	(married and/or unmarried men and women and/or families living in separate building units - share financial and work responsibilities)	29	32	33	31	31
communal living	(married and/or unmarried men and women and/or families living in same building unit - do not share sex partners)	26	29	39	26	30
none		17	32	12	24	20
group marriage[2]	(same as communal living except share sex partners)	9	5	13	2	9
not sure[3]		19	20	13	20	18

RELATION TO TRADITIONAL MARRIAGE	CM %	CW %	PM %	PW %	TOTAL %
should be an accepted alternative to traditional marriage - good for some people, not for others	72	81	86	95	83
should not be permitted - detrimental to society	5	10	3	0	4
should replace traditional marriage	0	0	0	0	0
not sure	23	10	11	6	13
NC					

1. χ^2=13.66, (sex/residence) 3df 2.χ^2(men/women)=5.48, 1df 3.χ^2(men/women)=6.90, 1df

Chapter V

MARRIAGE, DIVORCE AND CHILDREN

Research supports the generally accepted impression that marriage was one of the expectations of many women and men of college age in the past.[1] Is it an expectation of these students? They have grown up in a society which is more accepting than previous generations of Americans regarding non-traditional living styles, independence of women, skepticism about marriage - generally the right of the individual to be free to do as he chooses. The group's reaction to non-traditional living arrangements was described in the preceding chapter - what are their opinions of traditional marriage? Their expectations? What are their ideas about divorce? About having children? Several FFO items were designed to elicit answers to these questions; the students' responses are described in this chapter.

MARRIAGE

Questions about marriage included those concerning opinions and effects of marriage, shared characteristics and attitudes necessary to make marriage successful, and the students' expectations about marriage.

OPINIONS AND EFFECTS

The students were asked about their opinions of marriage in terms of a social and a personal perspective and long-range negative and positive effects. Their responses are reported in Table 9.

Social Perspective

Four descriptions of marriage relative to society were presented to the freshmen with directions to indicate which one best described their opinions. A fourth of them weren't sure. Nearly half said marriage should be one of several options among life styles. Only a fifth of the students, more commuters than residents, believed marriage was essential for a stable society, but very few freshmen thought it no longer had value in today's society or was necessary only if children were involved.

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[1] Rubiniec, Wyant, & Alberti, p.63, 65; Wolfe, p.48, 103; Wolfe & Claar, p.128-129; Rott, p.143-145.

TABLE 9

OPINIONS AND EFFECTS OF MARRIAGE

SOCIAL PERSPECTIVES

N=240

	%
Should be only one of several options among life styles	46
Essential for a stable society	21
Necessary only if children are involved	4
No longer has value in today's society	3
Not sure	26
NC	

PERSONAL PERSPECTIVES

N=228

	%*
The commitment of marriage provides the best opportunity for growth of love, trust, and understanding between a man and a woman	68
The commitment of marriage is too restricting in regard to travel, pursuit of personal interests and/or relationships with same or opposite sex	30
Marriage, more than anything else, makes life worthwhile	24
Marriage causes hurt, mistrust, disillusionment	10

LONG RANGE-EFFECTS

N=228

Causes problems:	%*
emotional[1]	66
financial[2]	51
sexual	46
social	25

Provides security:	%*
sexual	67
emotional	63
social	55
financial[3]	34

Limits development:	%*
vocational	33
social	32
personal	24
intellectual	17

Contributes to development:	%*
social[4]	49
personal	36
vocational	25
intellectual	21

Chi square computed for sex/residence data.

1. χ^2=9.65, 3df 2. χ^2=9.28, 3df 3. χ^2=8.83, 3df 4. χ^2=11.87, 3df

Personal Perspective

Four more personal descriptions were presented with directions to indicate as many of them as described the students' perceptions of marriage. Some thought that marriage, more than anything else, makes life worthwhile, while others felt that the commitment of marriage is too restricting in regard to travel, pursuit of personal interests and/or relationships with the same or opposite sex, and a few said that marriage causes hurt, mistrust, and disillusionment. The majority, however, believed that marriage provides the best opportunity for growth of love, trust, and understanding between a man and a woman. A third of the students indicated their awareness of the complexity of a marriage relationship by checking both positive and negative descriptions. There were no significant differences of opinion among any of the groups.

Long-range Effects

Eighteen options were presented to the students concerning long-range effects of marriage in terms of causing problems, providing security and limiting or contributing to development in various areas. The group were asked to check as many of the options as described their opinions. Three-fourths of the students checked both positive and negative responses. More than half of the group said that marriage causes emotional and financial problems and that it provides sexual, emotional and/or social security.

Commuter women were most apt to think marriage causes emotional problems, and resident men, least. Financial problems were associated with marriage most frequently by commuter women and least frequently by resident women, and as might be expected, more women than men said that marriage provides financial security.

More men than women felt that marriage contributes to social development, but fewer than half of the group thought that marriage either limited or contributed to personal, social, intellectual or vocational development. Intellectual development was considered least affected by marriage.

NECESSITY OF SHARED CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

The students were asked to indicate how necessary it was that marriage partners have certain characteristics and attitudes in common in order to have a successful marriage. Sameness of characteristics and similarity of attitudes were rated in terms of *necessary*, *desirable but not necessary*, or *doesn't matter*. Responses are reported in Table 10.

Same characteristics

The majority of the freshmen did not feel it necessary to a successful marriage that husbands and wives be of the same race, educational status, religious background or social/economic status; in fact about half of them said that if didn't matter whether or not the social/economic status or religion of spouses were the same. A number of students did feel that sharing the characteristics listed was desirable, though not necessary.

There were no significant differences in the responses among the sex/residence groups except concerning educational status. Fewer commuter men than others thought it necessary for spouses to have the same educational status in order to have a successful marriage. Resident women were least likely to say it didn't matter.

Table 10

NECESSITY OF SHARED CHARACTERISTICS FOR SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE

N=228

SAME CHARACTERISTICS	Necessary %	Desirable but not Necessary %	Doesn't Matter %
race	24	49	28
educational status[1]	22	46	31
religious background	8	44	48
social/economic status	5	38	57
SIMILAR ATTITUDES			
concerning marriage	79	19	2
concerning children	73	25	2
concerning finances	49	43	8
concerning people	32	56	12
concerning religion	17	53	30
concerning politics	4	28	68

1. $\chi^2=22.35$, 6df

Similar attitudes

Responses indicated that similarity of attitudes was more important to this group than commonality of race, religion, education or social/economic status. The majority of the group felt that similar attitudes toward marriage and/or children were *necessary*, similarity of those concerning people and religion were *desirable but not necessary*, and those toward politics *didn't matter*. The students were about evenly divided in their opinions as to whether similar attitudes toward finances were *necessary* or *desirable but not necessary*; few thought it didn't matter. A similar attitude toward finances was important to more commuter women and fewer commuter men than other groups.

EXPECTATIONS CONCERNING MARRIAGE

The students were asked not only about their opinions and perceptions of marriage, but also about their own desires to be married, the earliest age by which they expected to marry, and the expected duration of their marriages. Their responses are reported in Table 11.

Desire to Marry

One FFO item concerned whether or not the students wanted to marry, how definitely, and with what qualifications. The students revealed that although a few definitely did not want to, and a tenth of them (both women and men) thought they didn't want to, the majority of them wanted to marry. A few, both men and women, said they would rather risk an unhappy marriage than not marry; however, the largest proportion said they definitely wanted to marry but would rather have no marriage than an unhappy one. Some were not positive about their wishes and others said they wanted to marry but hadn't given much thought to life after marriage.

Earliest Age

The majority of students said that the earliest age by which they expected to be married was twenty-five. Among the remainder of the group, the earliest age marriage was expected by most women was *twenty*, by most men, *thirty*.

Duration of Marriage

Nearly all of the freshmen who expected to marry, expected their marriages to last until they or their spouses died.

Table 11

EXPECTATIONS REGARDING MARRIAGE

N=240

DESIRE TO MARRY	Women %	Men %	TOTAL %
I definitely want to marry, but I would rather have no marriage than an unhappy one	58	39	47
I think I want to marry	24	33	29
I think I don't want to marry	11	12	11
I want to marry--I haven't thought much about my life after marriage	4	10	8
I definitely want to marry--I would rather risk an unhappy marriage than have no marriage at all	3	2	2
I definitely don't want to marry	0	3	2
I am already married	0	2	1
NC			

EARLIEST AGE EXPECTED FOR MARRIAGE				DURATION EXPECTED OF MARRIAGE			
AGE	Women %	Men %	TOTAL %	DURATION	Women %	Men %	TOTAL %
20	32	11	20	1-10 years	1	2	1
25	59	69	65	10-20 years	2	2	2
30	9	17	13	20-30 years	3	2	3
35	0	2	1	Until one of us dies	90	87	88
40	0	0	0	Don't expect to marry	3	7	5
45	0	1	-				
50 & over	1	0	-				
already married	0	2	1				
NC				NC			

DIVORCE

With divorce more accepted and more easily obtained than in the past, this generation is surely more aware than previous ones of the consequences of divorce, both good and bad. What are their opinions of it? their expectations? The freshmen were asked to indicate as many of the defined qualifications for divorce listed as they agreed with. Their responses are reported in Table 12.

Table 12

OPINIONS OF DIVORCE

N=240

OPINION OF DIVORCE	%*
ok if every effort toward conciliation has been made	67
ok as long as both spouses want it	49
ok in cases of cruelty or desertion	38
ok as long as one spouse wants it	26
ok if no children are involved	25
never ok	6
not sure	19

Two-thirds of the students thought that divorce was ok if every effort toward conciliation had been made, and half of them, if both spouses wanted it. About a third said it was ok in cases of cruelty or desertion, and a fourth thought it was ok as long as one spouse wanted it and/or if no children were involved. Few believed that divorce was never ok, but a fifth of the freshmen said they weren't sure. There were no significant differences of opinion among the groups.

CHILDREN

Contraceptives, abortion and adoption provide more flexibility in plans involving children than was previously possible. Given their greater options, what are the desires of these students regarding having children? Three questions about children were included in FFO: the students' opinions of abortion, how many children the students wanted biologically and by adoption, and their preferences as to the sex of their children. Their responses are reported in Table 13.

Abortion

The group were asked to indicate under what, if any, circumstances they thought abortion was ok. While a tenth of them thought it was never ok and a tenth of them weren't sure of their opinions, the majority believed abortion was ok to save the woman's life, for pregnancies involving rape, and/or for those involving probable imperfection in the embryo. Fewer than half of the group said abortion was ok as long as the woman wants it, for unplanned pregnancies and/or for economic reasons. Several thought abortion was ok only with agreement of the man involved.

Number of Children Wanted

Most of the students wanted to have children eventually. Nearly half of them wanted two biologically; the next largest proportion wanted three. This is similar to findings from research on other 1972 freshmen.[2]

About a fourth of the students said they would like to adopt children - generally one or two, but the largest proportion said they weren't sure about adoption or didn't want to adopt children. Adoption appealed to more women than men. There was an unusually high percentage of non-response to this item about adoption (7%).

Preferred Sex of Children

Nearly all students who wanted to have children wanted both girls and boys.

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[2] Ameele & Jones, p. 10.

Table 13

CHILDREN

OPINION OF ABORTION (N=229)	%*
ok to save the woman's life	72
ok for pregnancies resulting from rape	59
ok for pregnancies with probable imperfection in the embryo	57
ok as long as the woman wants it	45
ok for unplanned pregnancies	43
ok for economic reasons	41
ok only with agreement of the man involved	17
never ok	10
not sure	10

NUMBER OF CHILDREN WANTED (N=240)	Biologically			By Adoption		
	Women %	Men %	TOTAL %	Women %	Men %	TOTAL %
0	3	2	3	17	40	30
1	5	1	3	16	12	14
2	50	43	46	19	5	11
3	12	22	18	3	2	2
4	14	11	12	1	0	-
5	2	1	1	0	1	-
6	0	2	1	0	2	1
Not Sure	13	18	16	44	39	41

NC

PREFERRED SEX OF CHILDREN (N=240)	%
both boy(s) and girl(s)	92
boy(s) only	7
girl(s) only	1

NC

Chapter VI

GOD OR SOME KIND OF LIFE FORCE

In the longitudinal project referred to previously, students expressed interest and concern about the religious area of their lives.[1] That, in turn, stimulated interest in investigating the beliefs and concepts of incoming freshmen about religion; therefore, several FFO items were designed to elicit information pertinent to that area of life. During interviews, it became evident that some students were not comfortable with the term "God" and yet wanted to acknowledge "something else" which was of concern to them. "Some Kind of Life Force" seemed to be the easiest and most acceptable way of talking about that "something else", therefore it was the term included in FFO items in which the students were asked to indicate which of several descriptions best described their concepts of and relationship with God or Some Kind of Life Force. Other items concern existence of and belief in God. The students' responses are described in this chapter.

CONCEPTS

Sixteen terms were listed and the students were directed to check as many of them as described their concepts of God or Some Kind of Life Force. Their responses are reported in Table 13.

The terms which a majority of the students said described their concepts were:

life, love, power, and/or *wisdom*

source of: hope, strength, comfort and/or *love*

force which exists in, above and beyond living beings

Designer of the universe and laws of nature.

Thirteen of the sixteen concepts were checked by more commuter women than any of the other groups.

Three concepts were each described by at least five students who checked the "other" option: omniessence, typified by *infinity, everything, the alpha and omega;* spirit, illustrated by *something there, not seen but felt and believed in, soul;* and Creator - *a force responsible for life itself, Creator of all mankind.*

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[1] Wolfe, p.23-27; Wolfe & Claar, p.16-21; Rott, p.85-89.

Table 14

CONCEPTS OF GOD OR SOME KIND OF LIFE FORCE

N=228

CONCEPTS	CM %*	CW %*	RM %*	RW %*	TOTAL %*
life[1]	62	88	63	64	67
love	59	76	52	56	59
power	59	61	49	46	53
wisdom[2]	48	71	48	44	51
knowledge	48	63	46	44	49
Source of:					
hope	68	83	66	62	68
strength[3]	60	85	60	56	64
comfort[4]	54	78	57	51	58
love[5]	52	76	49	47	54
beauty	39	63	42	40	44
Force which exists:					
in, above and beyond living beings[6]	45	76	49	55	54
in every human being	37	42	34	27	35
in every living being	34	29	39	18	31
above and beyond living beings	31	22	27	20	25
Designer of the universe and laws of nature[7]	48	68	54	33	50
all energy and matter	37	37	27	27	32
Other	25	22	16	26	22

1. $\chi^2=9.76$, 3df
2. $\chi^2=8.14$, 3df
3. $\chi^2=10.44$, 3df
4. $\chi^2=8.41$, 3df
5. $\chi^2=9.39$, 3df
6. $\chi^2=10.62$, 3df
7. $\chi^2=12.55$, 3df

EXISTENCE, BELIEF AND RELATIONSHIP

The incoming freshmen were asked about their opinions of the existence of God, necessity of belief in God, and their relationship with God or Some Kind of Life Force. Responses are reported in Table 14 by sex/residence to show the diversity of response.

Existence

When asked to indicate which one of several options best described their views about the existence of God, a fourth of the students said they weren't sure. The majority believed that God exists now; this was true for more commuters, especially women, than residents. A few members of the group thought God never existed, and one said God existed but no longer does.

Belief

Several descriptions about belief in God were presented with directions to check the one which best described the students' beliefs. There was an unusually high percentage of non-response (8%) - apparently the subject, or the phrasing of the item or options, created a problem for some students. Of those who responded, half said belief in God was necessary for some, not for others. Some thought it was necessary for full development of personal potential and a number said it was necessary to make life bearable. Very few thought belief in God was unnecessary for mature people.

Residents were more likely than commuters to say that belief in God was necessary for some, not for others; and commuters were more apt than residents to say belief in God was necessary for full development of personal potential. More men than women were unsure about the necessity of belief in God.

Relationship

When asked which of several descriptions best indicated the existence or importance of their relationship with God or Some Kind of Life Force, the majority of the group said that a relationship existed and was important to them. It was an important part of the daily lives of a fourth of the students; for similar proportion, it was important but not part of their daily lives. The relationship fluctuated for a number of students - it was important to them sometimes, but not others. Several said they had no relationship, and a few said a relationship existed but was not an important part of their lives.

Most commuter women found their relationship with God or Some Kind of Life Force important to them. For half of them, it was an important part of their daily lives. It was important to fewer of the other sex/residence groups. Some students from all groups were not sure about their relationships.

TABLE 15

GOD AND/OR SOME KIND OF LIFE FORCE

Existence, Belief and Relationship

N=228

	CN %*	CW %*	PN %*	PW %*	Total %*
Existence of God					
exists now	70	83	57	54	65
never existed	11	2	8	12	9
existed but no longer does	2	0	0	0	1
not sure	18	15	35	35	26
Belief in God					
necessary for some, not for others	41	31	52	67	49
necessary for full development of personal potential	24	37	20	11	22
necessary to make life bearable	13	23	10	15	14
unnecessary for mature people	6	0	0	6	3
not sure	16	9	18	2	12
Relationship with God or Some Kind of Life Force					
important part of my daily life	27	49	17	18	26
important, but not part of my daily life	16	32	33	20	25
fluctuates - important sometimes, not others	16	7	9	22	14
no relationship	11	2	17	11	11
relationship exists, but is not an important part of my life	17	0	6	7	8
not sure about the relationships	14	10	18	22	16

OVERVIEW

A multiple-choice questionnaire, *Family, Friends and Others*, was administered to 247 incoming freshmen at State University of New York at Buffalo in the summer of 1972. Responses from the 240 useable questionnaires revealed that the majority of students had relationships with their families which were good or great, loving, and close. Most of the time their mothers and fathers loved, liked, respected and expressed affection for them, trusted their judgment, discussed values and interests with them, truly listened to them, and understood them; and the students reciprocated. In addition, the mothers and fathers were interested in the students and encouraged their growth toward independence, and the students counted on their parents for emotional support.

The majority of the incoming freshmen had relationships with both women and men which were good or fine, some of which were stable, some fleeting. The students confided in three or more people and completely trusted three or more.

The majority of students sometimes thought about sexual intercourse and they believed it should be an expression of love, and/or engaged in only by persons who accept responsibility for physical, social and psychological consequences. Either eighteen or fifteen was the earliest age they thought sexual relations between unmarried partners was alright, but there was no concensus as to whether adultry was alright under any circumstances. They approved of abortion to save the woman's life, for pregnancies resulting from rape, and for those involving probable imperfection in the embryo. They said non-traditional living arrangements should be an accepted alternative to traditional marriage, but cohabitation was the only one of those described which they wanted to experience themselves.

The majority of the members of this group did not believe that marriage was essential for a stable society, but did think that it provides the best opportunity for growth of love, trust, and understanding between a man and a woman. They said marriage causes emotional and financial problems, but also provides financial security and contributes

to social development. They did not think it necessary to a successful marriage for husbands and wives to be of the same race, religious background, educational or social/economic status, but said similar attitudes concerning marriage and children were necessary, and similarity of those concerning people and religion was desirable though not necessary. They wanted to marry, twenty-five was the earliest age by which they expected to be married, and they wanted to have two or three children. Although they approved of divorce if every effort toward conciliation had been made or if both spouses wanted it, they expected their own marriages to last until they or their spouses died.

The majority of the students said their concepts of God or Some Kind of Life Force included *life, love, power, wisdom; source of: hope, strength, comfort, love, force which exists in, above and beyond living beings;* and *Designer of the universe and laws of nature.* Although they thought that belief in God is necessary for some people, not for others, they themselves believed that God exists and their relationship with God or Some Kind of Life Force was important to them.

For centuries, the youth of society have been described by various spokesmen as going to hell in a handbasket, so to speak. The description does not fit the group of freshmen whose opinions, perceptions and expectations are reported here; nor does it fit a group of their peers whose views about race, social class, politics, poverty and the United States were recently reported.[1] The research indicates, rather, a pretty secure, aware, searching, thoughtful, responsible group of young men and women.

They also are, as are any group of two hundred people, diverse in their opinions, perceptions and expectations. The focus of this overview has been on the responses of the majority of the students; however, if we are to understand these students, we must not lose sight of those whose responses were in the minority. Those, for example:

whose relationships with their families were not good or were terrible

whose parents didn't like, love or respect them

who confided in or completely trusted no one

whose relationships with peers was not so great/needed improvement

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[1] Faulman, Jane, *Student Opinion Survey*, 1972.

who thought about sex most of the time - or never

who thought sexual intercourse should be only between husband and wife

who thought twenty-one was the earliest age sex was ok between unmarried partners

who would like to experience group marriage - or who thought non-traditional arrangements were detrimental to society

who said marriage no longer has value in today's society - that it causes hurt, mistrust, disillusionment - that it contributes to intellectual development - or that it limits personal growth

who thought similar attitudes of spouses toward politics is necessary to a successful marriage - or similarity of attitudes concerning children doesn't matter

who are married - or don't want to marry

who don't want children - or want to adopt 6 children - or want all girls

who expect their marriages to last one to ten years - or expect fifty to be the earliest age at which they will be married

who think divorce or abortion is never alright

who believe God existed but no longer does - that belief in God is not necessary for mature people - who have a relationship with God or Some Kind of Life Force but it isn't important to them

who were not sure of their opinions

We need to remember all of them in order to understand our students.

Previous research indicates that their experiences over the next few years will contribute to development and/or modification of many students' opinions and values, and to their personal, social and intellectual growth.[2] It would be interesting to follow the change and stability of the perceptions, opinions and relationships described by these men and women, so the group will be invited to complete the same questionnaire at the end of their freshman year. Although no comparisons can be made for individuals because of the anonymity of their responses, group comparisons can be made. If the students are as generous as they were earlier in cooperating in this research, a sequel to this report will be possible.

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[2]Rott, p.77-118; Taulman, 71 *Senior Survey, Part I*, p.9-15.